

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SY-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 AID-05

CCO-00 FBOE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03 SP-02

OC-06 OPR-02 PA-02 USSS-00 CA-01 A-01 SCS-06

OMB-01 SS-15 SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-08 COME-00 /100 W

-----056119 271853Z /40

O 271628Z JUN 78

FM AMCONSUL MATAMOROS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 437

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS MATAMOROS 0057

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ASEC, CASC, PINS

SUBJECT: POLICE BRUTALITY INCITES RIOTS IN MATAMOROS

1. DURING SEVERAL HOURS IN THE EVENING OF JUNE 26 UNCONTROLLABLE MOBS RIOTED IN MATAMOROS SETTING FIRE TO THE CITY HALL, TO TWO STATE COURTS AND TO SEVERAL AUTOMOBILES, THEY SMASHED WINDOWS OF FIVE BANKS AND LOOTED AT LEAST THIRTY STORES. THEY DISBANDED WHEN ARMY UNITS APPEARED ON THE SCENE. THE LOSSES ARE IN THE MILLIONS OF PESOS.

2. THE RIOT WAS INCITED BY MATAMOROS' MAYOR INACTION TO TAKE MEASURES AGAINST THE LOCAL POLICE AFTER A 15 YEAR-OLD STUDENT DIED ON JUNE 20 AS A RESULT OF A BEATING BY AN ARRESTING COP. SEVERAL DELEGATIONS OF STUDENTS AND OF OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION, HAD BEEN ASKING THE MAYOR, FIRST TO ARREST THE POLICEMAN WHO HAD FLED (BUT WHO TURNED HIMSELF IN YESTERDAY) AND LATER ESCALATED THEIR DEMANDS THAT THE CHIEF OF POLICE BE FIRED. THE MAYOR REFUSED TO GIVE IN TO THE LATTER DEMAND REQUESTING FROM THE PEOPLE "PROOF THAT THE CHIEF OF POLICE WAS IN ANYWAY INVOLVED IN THE BOY'S DEATH". THE CHIEF OF POLICE HIMSELF HAS A RATHER SOMBER PAST.

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3. THE TWO STATE COURTS MENTIONED ABOVE, PLUS OFFICES OF TWO STATE DISTRICT ATTORNEYS AND THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE ARE LOCATED IN THE SAME BUILDING HOUSING THE CITY JAIL. THESE OFFICES WERE RANSAKED BY THE MOB WHO AFTER TAKING MANY WEAPONS, SET THE OFFICES ON FIRE. ALL WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED. REPORTEDLY TWO OF THE ATTACKERS WERE SHOT AND

KILLED. TEN PRISONERS MANAGED TO ESCAPE BEFORE THE ARMY TOOK CONTROL OF THE JAIL.

4. NONE OF THE EIGHT AMERICAN INMATES IN THE JAIL WERE INJURED. PRINCIPAL OFFICER VISITED THEM THIS MORNING. NO OTHER AMERICANS IN MATAMOROS WERE INJURED. THE RESIDENTIAL SECTION WHERE THE CONSULATE AND THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE ARE LOCATED WAS IN NO WAY DISTURBED.

COMMENTS: ALTHOUGH THE RIOTS BEGAN AS A RESULT OF POLICE BRUTALITY, THERE IS EVIDENCE OF OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT. THE MAYOR SAID LAST NIGHT THAT PROFESSIONAL AGITATORS FROM OUTSIDE MATAMOROS LED THE RIOTERS WITH THE PURPOSE OF DISCREDITING HIS ADMINISTRATION AND TO CAUSE PROBLEMS TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO. THE MAYOR SAID THAT THIS IS ACTUALLY A SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT WHICH HAS APPEARED IN THE RECENT PAST IN OTHER PARTS OF MEXICO. THE LEADER OF THE POWERFUL LABOR UNION CTM, ORDERED ALL WORKERS TO STAY HOME TODAY AS AN ACT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE MAYOR. ARENZ

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